



The 21st Navajo Nation Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Navajo Council's IGR Committee passes resolution requesting emergency federal consultation for snowmaking on the sacred San Francisco Peaks

"History has shown that failure to include the voices of tribal officials in formulating policy affecting their communities has all too often led to undesirable and, at times, devastating and tragic results," – President Barak Obama

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Intergovernmental Relations Committee unanimously passed a resolution today requesting emergency consultation with federal agencies regarding snowmaking on Dook'o'sliid, the San Francisco Peaks.

On Nov. 2, 2009 President Barack Obama issued a Memorandum on Tribal Consultation to federal executive departments and agencies confirming that they are responsible for strengthening the government-to-government relationship between the U.S. and tribal nations through consultation and collaboration. Pursuant to the president's memorandum, the committee on behalf of the Navajo Nation is requesting emergency consultation and collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Justice.

"History has shown that failure to include the voices of tribal officials in formulating policy affecting their communities has all too often led to undesirable and, at times, devastating and tragic results," said Obama, in his memorandum.

The three federal agencies are actively engaged in enabling Arizona Snowbowl to make snow on Dooko'o'sliid, which is a sacred and holy site to 13 tribes in the Southwest, including the Navajo Nation.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act also requires tribal consultation when a federal agency's project or effort affects a site that holds religious or cultural significance to a Native American Tribe, such as the case with the U.S. Department of Agriculture granting approval for snowmaking on the sacred Dooko'o'sliid.

In July, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) granted approval for snowmaking, using either reclaimed (effluent/treated wastewater) water or potable water for snowmaking at the Arizona Snowbowl, which the tribes continue to oppose. The proposal to use reclaimed water resulted in a civil lawsuit filed by various tribal nations due to public health concerns. Recently, however, the USDA has proposed using drinking-quality water as an alternative source, which the tribes still oppose.

On Sept. 2, the Flagstaff City Council will decide to (1) amend its current contract with Arizona Snowbowl to allow either directly delivered reclaimed water (effluent water/treated waste water) or indirect delivered reclaimed water (potable or drinking water) contingent upon Snowbowl committing to one or the other, (2) leave the original agreement in place and provide direct delivered reclaimed water (effluent water/treated waste water), or 3) develop a new agreement to use indirect reclaimed water (potable/drinking water) only.

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The view of the Navajo Nation is that if the federal government is engaged in further desecration of sacred sites, then consultation and coordination with tribes needs to occur before any funds, approvals, permits or authorizations are given to Arizona Snowbowl for snowmaking using reclaimed or re-injected potable water. Both reclaimed water and potable water are still being considered by the Flagstaff City Council.

Honorable Raymond Joe, chairman of the Public Safety Committee, sponsored the resolution. The committee passed the resolution with a vote of 7-0.

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